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UNIVERSITY-LIBRARY COOPERATION IN PROVIDING
SERVICES TO WORKERS

by

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It is not news to librarians that today approximately 80 colleges and universities in the United States are offering on-campus and extension services in varying amounts to American workers.

Particularly since 1944 state legislatures have given substantial grants to a number of industrial relations and labor-management institutes established at state colleges and state universities, which, as part of their function, carry on programs in workers' education.

On the federal level, bills that would create a national labor extension service similar to that now accorded farm workers have been reported out in both the Senate and the House and may be passed during the second session of the current Congress. Under this legislation, funds would be provided libraries conducting special services for workers.

Obviously, it would be well for libraries contemplating the establishment of such special services to move before the labor extension service bills are passed. The bills provide that funds will be granted specific institutions only when labor groups request the services they render. Requests, of course, are much more likely to be referred to institutions which have functioning programs through which rapport with workers has been established.

The three developments alluded to in the preceding paragraphs point up an unusual opportunity available to libraries and librarians qualified and willing to serve trade unionists and unorganized laboring men; for books, pamphlets, clippings, etc. are essential to the development of any adult education program. Certainly where participants, on the average, have had relatively little formal education, professional advice on reading materials is absolutely necessary.

Here and there, libraries have seized the opportunity and are doing outstanding work in satisfying felt needs and increasing demand. In some areas, libraries and universities have come together to complement each other and thus to broaden the total service offered.

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This has been the case in New Jersey on state, county and local levels.

At the annual convention of the New Jersey Library Association last June, one evening meeting was devoted to the topic "Labor and Libraries in New Jersey".

Joel R. Jacobson, Research Director of the New Jersey State CIO Council, discussed the kind of library services labor organizations need. The writer explained services offered by the Rutgers Labor Program and suggested ways in which the State University and libraries might cooperate.

Three librarians with the assistance of floor discussion then mulled over what had been covered by the two speakers.

Librarians in attendance left the meeting with plenty of basic information on what could be done for worker groups.

Throughout the four days of the 19th Annual Rutgers Labor Institute, held on the New Brunswick campus last summer, the University Library, the State Library, and the Newark and New Brunswick Public Libraries worked together to provide trained library personnel, exhibits, books, pamphlets, etc. to assist the two hundred AFL members in attendance from all over the state. This is the kind of cooperative endeavor which has been lacking everywhere in the country.

Last April, the Rutgers Institute of Management and Labor Relations and the Essex County Librarians together sponsored a one-day session on "The Role of Public Libraries in Promoting Labor-Management Harmony". Again, at this meeting the writer went over possibilities inherent in library-university cooperation in servicing workers. Real interest in the prospect seemed to be generated.

However, most instances of library-university cooperation have taken place on the local level. Among others, New Jersey librarians at Caldwell, East Orange, Verona, New Brunswick, Trenton and Linden, have worked with the Rutgers Institute of Management and Labor Relations to provide reading lists, local library displays and, in some cases, class visits by librarians in many of the extension courses run by the Institute throughout the state.

On state, county and local levels in New Jersey, then, the State University and libraries are expanding joint services to workers. These services not only bring the University and libraries into a closer and increasingly useful partnership, they also help with the whole problem of community integration by throwing together labor and the libraries, management and the libraries and, on occasion, labor and management and the libraries in a cooperative and functional endeavor. They, through direct contact, help increase understanding between component groups in the community.

A few examples will illustrate this point and will, perhaps, suggest ideas and procedures to libraries about to undertake provision of special services to workers.

Labor-university participation in a state library association annual meeting, already discussed, as done in New Jersey, is one method of bringing the possibilities of library-university cooperation in the field of service to workers to the attention of librarians.

Similarly, as was done in New Jersey's Essex County, libraries, labor, management and the university, in any one of several combinations, can introduce possible plans for cooperation on service to a regional group of librarians.

Locally, there are manifold potentialities.

Last Spring, in Newark, the Essex Trades Council - AFL worked out with the public school administration a series of talks on labor to high school seniors delivered by union members. The Labor Program of the Rutgers Institute of Management and Labor Relations, called upon for a special training class for these union "teachers", found its task considerably lightened because the Newark Public Library, through its Service to Trade Unions, brought books, pamphlets, clippings, research and advice on materials to the classroom each time the group met.

At the New Jersey State CIO Labor School, held in conjunction with the Rutgers Labor Program last August, that same library provided a portable exhibit-library and reading lists. Proof of carry-over of this activity came in October when, in a class in southern New Jersey, a worker who had attended the summer school brought his reading list to the instructor with the suggestion that it be used by the class and with a recitation of what on it he had already covered and found of real value.

An outgrowth of a radio script prepared by students in the Rutgers Labor Program's New Brunswick Radio Workshop was an exhibit at the New Brunswick Public Library commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Textile Workers Union of America - CIO. While students who did the script were discussing materials useful in learning to write for radio with local library personnel, the idea of the exhibit was born and was soon carried through.

Newark classes for workers conducted by the Labor Program always benefit from at least one visit from Dorothy Bendix of the Newark Public Library or her assistant. Students welcome the books and pamphlets brought to class which, once they sign library cards, they can take home with them. These workers also learn from the library representative of the existence of the special department the library maintains for them which, later, a good proportion of them visit.

These examples demonstrate that things are happening in New Jersey in the area of joint library-university service to workers. Much more will be done, and it is to be hoped that libraries and librarians outside the Garden State will consider services provided there worthy of emulation elsewhere.

LABOR BOOK FAIR

by

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During the month of September a Labor Book Fair was conducted at the Worcester Free Public Library. This Fair was planned and organized by a committee which in addition to the library staff included the Presidents of the Central Labor Union and the C.I.O. Industrial Union Council, the editor of the local labor paper, and labor officials.

Newspapers were generous in their coverage of the project. Not only did they carry several accounts of the Fair, but they published several pictures of it as well.

Large printed notices announcing the Fair were posted at the headquarters of the several large unions, at the meeting places of the various locals of other unions, and in the many industrial plants throughout the city.

While the Fair was in progress all the facilities of the adult division of the library were utilized to promote the project. Posters, uniform as to color and lettering, were placed on all bulletin boards. Booklists were prepared by the staffs of each division of the Adult Department. These lists covered such topics as Planning and Conducting a Union Meeting, Workers' Education, the How and Why of Unions, Social Security, Youth and Labor, Reference Services for Labor, and Labor in Poetry and Song. In addition to these a general, or basic list of books on Labor, "Labor in American Life",* was issued. A kit** containing all the lists was made available to everyone visiting the Fair. Book displays featuring the books found on the prepared lists were set up in all the divisions.

Films on labor were another feature of our Fair. These were shown every afternoon while the Fair was in progress. Many of these were loaned to us by the National Headquarters of several unions.

A highlight of the Fair was an open meeting addressed by John Connors, Director of the Workers' Education Bureau of America. He gave an interesting and informative talk on the part the Library can play in workers' education.

Actual results of the project are hard to evaluate or measure, being somewhat intangible. Several hundred booklists were circulated. Many laboring men and women visited the library perhaps for the first time. And although there is a decided increase in the circulation of books on labor, how much of this increase is due to the Fair or to the demand from the students of the several colleges of the city, is difficult to determine.

Definitely on the positive side is the good public relations established between the library and the labor leaders of this city. They now realize that this library is not only equipped but willing and anxious to advance the education of the laboring man.

* * * *

FILMS FOR LABOR

Three recently issued film catalogs will be of interest to librarians working with labor groups. These catalogs will be very useful for film selection if the library has a film collection and for reference and program use if the library does not own any films itself.

Films for Labor, 1949. CIO Film Division, 718 Jackson Place, N. W.
Washington 6, D. C. Free to librarians working with labor, 25¢
to others.

Film List #1 and 2, 1948-49, Educational Department, I.L.G.W.U.,
1710 Broadway, New York 19, New York. Free.

T.W.U.A. Film Catalogue, 1949. Film Division - Education Department,
Textile Workers Union of America, CIO, 99 University Place,
New York 3, New York. 25¢.

* * * *

* A limited number of copies of this list is available to interested libraries upon request.

** The supply of the complete kit is exhausted but a copy can be lent for a short time.

PLANS FOR MIDWINTER MEETING

The Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups together with the Adult Education Section of the A.L.A. Division of Public Libraries has prepared the following tentative program for the Midwinter Conference to be held in Chicago, at the Edgewater Beach Hotel, January 26-29, 1950:

Friday, January 27, 8:30-10 a.m.

What the Librarian Needs to Know to Give Effective Service to Labor.

Saturday, January 28, 8:30-10 a.m.

Making and Purpose of Book Lists for Labor.

Jack Barbash, author of "Labor Unions in Action", has agreed to participate in both meetings which will be conducted as an informal workshop with a great deal of opportunity for discussion.

Please send in any book lists for labor which your library has put out.

REPORT ON REGIONAL MEETINGS

As was reported in the previous issue of the NEWSLETTER the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups sponsored meetings at three of the Regional Conferences. Since many of the readers of the NEWSLETTER did not attend any one of the meetings, a summary of all three of them follows:

Middle Atlantic Conference, Atlantic City, October 3, 1949

This meeting was a panel discussion on LABOR - THE "FORGOTTEN MAN" IN LIBRARY SERVICE?

George T. Guernsey, Associate Director of Education of the CIO, stressed the fact that in order to give effective library service to labor, it is necessary to accept a labor frame of reference. He said it is particularly important to know your own local labor movement. He mentioned the amount of labor material available from unions themselves, such as the pamphlet material sent out by the CIO, and the need for librarians to get on such mailing lists. The library can be a great help, he said, in helping with research problems on the local union level. Another possible service libraries can offer was suggested when he described the CIO's interest in films. In regard to labor exhibits, Mr. Guernsey pointed out how necessary it is that they be geared to labor's educational work.

Anthony S. Luchek, head of the Labor Education Service, Pennsylvania State College, pointed out that there is every reason for universities to go into this field. Labor is an important force in the community and universities should serve them in the same way they serve other groups, such as employers, farmers, etc. He pointed out that over 80 universities are now carrying on workers' education programs; within the last four years such programs have more than doubled. Their reasons for going into labor education are many. Some have wanted to do things to labor and others have wanted to do things for labor. He said too few have gone in with the idea of doing things with the trade union movement.

Mrs. Dorothy Oko, in charge of Library Service to Trade Unions at the New York Public Library, pointed out that in trying to make contact with labor representatives it often becomes discouraging because, just when you feel you are establishing a

rapport, there is a shift in jobs and you have a new person to deal with. Mrs. Oko described some of the services offered by the New York Public Library. In connection with lending book collections to unions, in most cases this is undertaken on a cooperative basis, with the union sharing part of the expense. Other services offered in New York are collections of books for stewardship classes, booklists for classes not requiring books, reference service and help to unions in planning educational programs.

Miss Bendix gave a brief history of library service to labor and the ALA Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups. Miss Bendix pointed out that only one library, the Milwaukee Public Library, has a long record of continuous service in this field. While there was talk of the need for service to labor during the 20's and 30's, little action was taken. She also pointed out that, in the past, such service has been tied to an individual staff member, with the result that when that person left the library the service ended. Even today there are only a few known libraries in the field, notably Milwaukee, Boston, Akron, New York and Newark. A few others offer some service without a special department devoted to labor. Miss Bendix questioned whether this could be considered sufficient progress over 20 years, in view of the development of other special services such as readers' advisory services and library service to hospitals. It is the hope of the ALA Joint Committee to change this picture, she said.

Miss Bendix then summarized the Committee's activities to date, which include the sponsorship of meetings, the issuing of a Newsletter, and the fostering of library participation in a country-wide series of institutes held this year by the International Association of Machinists. In mentioning the Committee's endorsement of the Labor Extension Bill, Miss Bendix pointed out its importance to libraries, in that it would facilitate regional library service to labor.

Discussion from the floor brought forth such questions as: What can libraries in small communities do?; How can the librarian make labor contacts?; In what areas can the library serve best?

In closing the discussion the Joint Committee offered its counsel to librarians interested in starting a service to labor.

B.J.D.

New England Conference, Swampscott, October 13, 1949

The meeting on LABOR AND LIBRARIES IN NEW ENGLAND was sponsored by the Adult Education Section of the ALA Public Libraries Division and the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups.

The three speakers at this meeting demonstrated the joint nature of this committee in that they represented a Union, Workers Education and the Library: Mrs. Robinson, Educational Director of the New England I.L.G.W.U., Mr. Dunn, Director of Workers Education at Rhode Island State College, and Miss Flynn, Assistant Librarian at Lynn Public Library.

All three speakers stressed the growing importance of organized labor in American life, their increasing political consciousness and influence on our national and international policies; the tremendous complexities and responsibilities which face them today. Mr. Dunn described the role which the colleges and universities are now taking in providing facilities, teachers and materials for developing responsible and informed Union leadership. The initiative for the program at Rhode Island State College came from some international unions and local union leaders and the Workers Education Bureau. A labor advisory committee was set up. A variety of courses of different lengths are offered in strategic places throughout the state.

Mrs. Robinson of the I.L.G.W.U. in Boston described how her union's efforts to promote education with limited facilities have been tremendously helped by the Boston Public Library through the provision of reading materials both at headquarters and also at factories. She realistically described the obstacles to reading - the lack of readable material and the lack of time. Workers in her industry being mostly women - tired at the end of a day and probably having to do housework on their return home, need more than the usual two week period for reading books.

Miss Flynn expressed very strongly her recognition of the library's responsibility in serving organized labor but that progress is slow, due, on the library's part, to insufficient funds to provide and distribute books for the complete union membership; on the union's part, to lukewarm interest of the educational directors. An interesting suggestion was the use of Bookmobiles to stop at industrial plants at lunch hours - serving the workers easily and without the necessity of leaving books on long loans which are often never used.

In the ensuing discussion, the Worcester Public Library's attempt to stimulate interest in workers' education was described by Miss McGrath. A Labor Book Fair was held recently and though no outstanding results in respect to numbers attending were visible, she felt that a beginning had been made in informing labor and the community of the library's materials and interest. S.E.

Midwest Conference, Grand Rapids, Nov. 12, 1949

The meeting on THE LIBRARY AND LABOR EDUCATION was sponsored jointly by the A.L.A. Public Libraries Division, Adult Education Section and the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups.

Workers' Education Today, by Victor Reuther, Education Director of UAW-CIO.

Mr. Reuther began by saying that there is no magic formula to stimulate workers' education programs. It is a process of facing the needs of labor and providing resources and services for them. Labor has not had facilities available to them that other groups in our society have had. Since there have been no special materials or services, unions have had to set up their own programs. The urgent need for leaders who could take their place across the bargaining table made it necessary for unions to stress leadership training. Besides leadership training, programs for workers should give them a background for understanding their community and their world. No other group, for instance, has made a more outstanding contribution to racial understanding. It was due to the work in the unions that there were no conflicts in factories during the Detroit race riots.

He pointed out that libraries have done much better than any other agency in making materials and services available to labor. They have furnished a basis for future cooperative effort in this field. During the last year UAW has had an attendance of 60,000 in its workshops and institutes and classes. He stressed that the interests of union members are the same as those of any other group. They are interested in their community and its activities. To develop cooperative programs with unions he suggested that librarians anticipate the direction of labor interest, and that they make known materials by issuing book lists with annotations and by developing audio-visual programs. He also suggested that librarians set up joint advisory committees inviting labor members to participate - these committees to explore the possibilities in the community for joint activities.

University and Workers' Education, by William Diamond (who substituted for Mr. Arthur Elder) representing the Workers' Education Bureau.

Mr. Diamond pointed out that universities have been slow in recognizing the

needs of labor groups. Most university programs are hampered by a lack of personnel, financing, and frequently labor's lack of interest. He explained four different types of university programs that are now in existence, differentiating between those which have industrial relations departments, field services, and those providing seminars and institutes. He suggested methods of library-university cooperation in labor programs in the local community.

Workers Do Read, by Genevieve Casey of the Detroit Public Library.

Miss Casey described some of the work of the Extension Division in its work with labor unions. She pointed out the use of lists and book collections as well as the Detroit Public Library's cooperation with the institutes and camps operated by the unions. She pointed out the need for simpler and more readable material on subjects of immediate interest to labor unions, such as pensions, social security, etc. In a sampling that she made in one of the local unions she found that the workers were interested in the following subjects: public speaking, collective bargaining, work of the steward, and getting along with people. She also pointed out the great need for classes on how to read, which was a need in this group as in so many others. In conclusion she suggested that more reading lists and more visits to unions introducing the library would be the best means of interesting workers in reading.

Following the three talks there was a very fine and active discussion. One of the first things that came up was how and where to get materials put out by unions that can be used with labor groups. We were astonished to find that out of a group of about a hundred librarians only ten knew where to get materials such as the Labor Education Guide, put out by American Labor Education Service.

The next point of discussion was the problem of book lists and whether they should include materials from the point of view of management as well as that of labor. Mr. Reuther, in answer to this question, said that he would have no objections to having management materials because he was well aware that industry was very anxious to get any labor material that comes out and that labor was always watching for material that industry puts out. But he did point out the need for annotations and analysis so the person would know the point of view of the book. In this connection, Mr. Diamond suggested that in the attempt to make balanced programs and balanced lists, people were so interested in keeping the balance that they frequently overlooked the importance of the content.

The next point discussed was visual aids. Mr. Reuther pointed out how effective this media was in work with labor and described the UAW film collection which is one of the finest in the country. Besides films, radio programs and television were brought up as possibilities for future work. The Labor Education Extension Bill was discussed by Mr. Reuther and Mr. Diamond and before the meeting was over several members from the floor urged that librarians support the bill and do their utmost to see that the community is aware of the importance of supporting it. I. G.

Suggestions for Future Meetings Wanted

We have reported on these three Regional Conference Meetings in some detail mainly because we are anxious to receive comments from NEWSLETTER readers as to the kind of meetings they would like to see the Joint Committee sponsor in the future, and what subjects they want discussed.

Since tentative plans for the ALA Midwinter Meeting had to be made by November 15 there was not enough time to wait for suggestions. However, there will be other meetings, and your comments and ideas will be appreciated.

Only if the needs of librarians in the field of service to labor are made known to the Joint Committee can it do a good job. Won't you help us?

Public Library Service to Labor Groups, a pamphlet which brings together five case studies from the Akron, Boston, Milwaukee, New York, and Newark Public Libraries, will be published by A.L.A. about January 1, 1950. The studies, which appeared in preliminary form as parts of former Newsletters, have been revised and brought up to date. They give not only a glimpse of the organizational set-up used by these libraries, and the types of services provided, but also serve as patterns of service which might be adapted to a variety of local situations. The price will be 65¢.

ORDER FORM

Please send (when published) copies of the pamphlet Public Library Service to Labor Groups (65¢).

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